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TRAGIC GUILT IN THE MODERN DRAMA

In critical writings of the last twenty years one not infrequently finds the statement that tragic guilt is not found nor has any legitimate place in the modern drama. Thus Rudolf Strauss¹ insists that there can no longer be any question of individual guilt since the forces of heredity and environment are now regarded as practically determining man's actions and being; and hence tragic guilt no longer has a place in the drama and ought, therefore, also be dropped from theoretical discussions. In the same volume of *Dramaturgische Blätter*, (p. 273 f.) appears an article on "Die tragische Unschuld," in which similar views are expressed: "Das Gewöhnliche ist, dass Leiden mit Schuld nichts zu tun hat. Also wird uns ein Kunstwerk um so mehr befriedigen, je weniger wir von der natürlichen Folge der Ereignisse abgelenkt werden durch Begriffe wie Schuld, Sünde u.s.w. Ein tragischer Held, der schuldig ist, wird das moderne Bewusstsein nur stören. Ein tragischer Held dagegen, bei dem an einem besonderen Beispiele die Unschuld des Leidens gezeigt wird, befriedigt heute. Man kann also wohl sagen, dass wir daran sind, den Begriff der tragischen Schuld in den der tragischen Unschuld zu verwandeln." A. Henderson in *The Changing Drama*,² an excellent survey of the modern drama in its various forms and tendencies, also makes the statement that tragic guilt no longer obtains in the modern drama.

It is not necessary in this connection to enter into a lengthy discussion of the theoretical aspects of tragic guilt, nor into the historical development of this idea from the days of Aristotle down to the present; for both of these phases have been very frequently and ably discussed.³ But in order to get a clear conception of our problem it is well to define what is usually meant by the term tragic guilt. Franz Schnass⁴ has stated the classi-

¹ Rudolf Strauss, "Die tragische Schuld," *Dramaturgische Blätter*, 1898, p. 265.

² A. Henderson, *The Changing Drama*, New York, 1910, Chapter V.

³ Compare Julius Goebel, *Ueber tragische Schuld und Sühne*, Berlin, 1884; and Joh. Volkelt, *Ästhetik des Tragischen*, Münschen, 1897. Achter Abschnitt. Die tragische Schuld.

⁴ Franz Schnass, *Der Dramatiker Schiller*, Leipzig, 1914. p. 623.

cist's conception of tragic guilt so well that I can do no better than quote his own words. He says: "Tragisch ist die Darstellung einer leidvollen Handlung, die aus dem Konflikt erwächst zwischen dem individuellen Handeln und der sittlichen Weltordnung, die durch den Untergang des Helden, der die Schuld auf sich lädt, gegen sie zu verstossen, wiederhergestellt wird. Nach dieser Theorie sind die Freiheit des Handelns und die Notwendigkeit der sittlichen Weltordnung die festen Gegenpole, die den tragischen Konflikt konstituieren."

It is easy to understand why this conception has been so vigorously attacked in an age dominated by Darwinian conceptions. Under the profound influence of the natural sciences the two opposite poles of the tragic conflict, freedom of the will and the necessity of the moral order of the universe, have been attacked and overthrown. Whether this scientific or quasi-scientific conception is really tenable and enduring, is a question which I shall not attempt to discuss in this connection. However that may be, the modern drama has been profoundly influenced by this conception.

Although the theory of tragic guilt as given above in the words of Schnass obtained practically undisputed from the days of Aristotle down to the time of Hebbel and even after him, it would be going too far to attempt to explain every tragic character on that basis. To avoid all possible misunderstanding on this point it is well to keep in mind Volkelt's classification of the tragic into the tragic of mere misfortune and the tragic of merited misfortune (das Tragische des einfachen Unglücks und das Tragische des verschuldeten Unglücks).⁵ Today no dramatic critic would seriously maintain that the mistakes of Egmont, Götz, Romeo, Juliet, Lear, and Cordelia constitute tragic guilt. The disparity between the wrong, if there is any at all, and the inflicted "punishment" is too great. We feel that they are victims of circumstances or of the machinations or guilt of others. Of the scores of other characters belonging to this category that might be mentioned here I shall mention only two, Hebbel's Genoveva and Agnes Bernauer. These deserve special attention inasmuch as they are the result of a conscious and deliberate modification of the old conception of tragic guilt.

⁵ *Ästhetik des Tragischen*. Achter Abschnitt.

Hebbel, like the philosopher Hegel, held that the tragic is not, as heretofore maintained, a result of the wrong direction of the will, but of the mere assertion and existence of the will. Agnes and Genoveva are absolutely innocent, yet their fate is tragic. Their great beauty, physical and moral, that is, their perfection rather than their imperfection involves them in a net of tragic difficulties from which there is no escape. This is the first important deviation from the old conception in theory as well as in practice. This really is "tragische Unschuld," but not in the sense suggested in the article by Strauss quoted above. Hebbel nowhere attacks the freedom of the will, nor does he put the blame on ancestors or environment, as this is done by later dramatists. He is fond of depicting a struggle in which both sides are in the right. To my mind Hebbel's conception of the tragic is by far the most profound that has been evolved so far; but it is also the most difficult for the dramatist.

The step from Hebbel's conception of the tragic or better from the old conception of tragic guilt (for Hebbel stood alone with his views) to the modern viewpoint that tragic guilt no longer has a place in the drama is, after all, of considerable magnitude. As stated above, it is the result of the growing influence of the natural sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century. More and more man is being regarded as a mere animal whose habits and actions are determined by hereditary influences and the conditions of his habitat and environment. As man degenerates to a mere animal, a link in a chain of cause and effect, or a mere passive member of society, he necessarily loses much of his former importance as a free personality. We must, therefore, be prepared to find in the drama based on this new conception of man a type or types of character radically different from those found in the drama in which the old conception obtains.

I shall now endeavor to determine the actual facts with regard to the use or elimination of tragic guilt in the modern drama, and the changes in the drama and its characters due to the elimination of tragic guilt, in so far as this has taken place. It is, of course, impossible and even undesirable to examine the whole field of the modern drama and to discuss in detail each and every instance where tragic guilt has either been used or eliminated. I shall limit myself to the discussion of a number of more or less typical

cases chosen from some of the most representative and important of the modern dramatists.

The new conception, for which Zola, the French novelist, blazed the way, begins to find expression in the drama in the seventies, and during the two succeeding decades it plays a most important rôle. Henrik Ibsen was the first dramatist to stress it. In the *Ghosts* (1881) man, viewed from the Darwinian standpoint, is the helpless slave of hereditary influences and environment. Mrs. Alving is the victim of modern society based on sham and lies. She was too weak to resist successfully the demands of society and to regulate her life according to the requirements of her own nature and individuality. She yielded and her life was ruined. Oswald, her only child, to save whom she put forth every effort, is the victim of the licentious life of his father. He is physically worm-eaten, as his doctor tells him, and morally he is no better; and his half-sister Regina, who is physically sound, is morally on the same plane with him. They are both quite devoid of will-power to resist the evil desires and tendencies they have inherited. There can hardly be a question of guilt in their case. They are helpless victims of conditions and forces over which they have no control.

As long as Oswald is under the impression that his condition is due to his own habits of life, he is tormented by bitter remorse; but this disappears completely when he learns the truth from his mother. Mrs. Alving herself, though she realizes that she should not have yielded so readily to the demands of society, does not utter a single word that betrays a feeling of guilt; and the dramatist, it seems to me, has studiously avoided laying any blame on her. We can therefore truly say that there is no tragic guilt in the old sense in this most intense tragedy. Nevertheless, the idea of guilt plays a very important rôle; only it has been transferred from the individual to society and its baneful institutions.

In a number of the other dramas of Ibsen, notably *Rosmersholm* and *Little Eyolf*, tragic guilt plays a very important rôle. It is, however, a new type of tragic guilt, or, at least, it differs greatly from the old type.

The two chief characters in *Rosmersholm*, Johannes Rosmer and Rebecca West, both have emancipated themselves from the old view that there is a judge, before whom man must answer

for his deeds done in the flesh. Rebecca has inherited a "conscience" that allows her to pursue her selfish aims without any misgivings or scruples. She does not even hesitate to drive her rival to death. But under the ennobling influence of Rosmer, who in spite of his emancipated views still clings to the doctrine of personal responsibility and suffers bitter pangs of remorse, her strong will has become diseased, as she says, and she has come to the point where she says: "It is right that I should expiate the wrong I have done." Together with Rosmer, who says: "There is no judge over us. And therefore we must see that we ourselves work justice," she dies to expiate the wrong she has done.

Even more interesting from the standpoint of the use of tragic guilt is *Little Eyolf*. This play is not, strictly speaking, a tragedy; for the principal characters, Allmers and his wife Rita, do not die. Yet their fate is as thoroughly tragic as it could possibly be, aside from actual death, and perhaps even more tragic than death itself. Like Rosmer and Rebecca they do not believe in God or in life after death, where man is called to account. Yet the feeling of guilt is nowhere more pronounced, even in the most extreme examples of the drama of the old type, than in these two characters.

Even before the death of their unfortunate crippled boy this feeling becomes powerful, especially in the father; for it is largely this feeling of guilt, of indebtedness to the helpless child, that forces him to give up his life work, the writing of a book on "Retribution." In the mother, too, who feels little or no obligation toward the innocent victim of their self-gratification, the feeling of guilt is present, though dormant and overshadowed by her intense passion for life and pleasure, which even causes her to wish the child had never been born or were dead if she is to share her husband with him. But she has scarcely uttered, or better, suppressed this wish, when, at the news of the child's death, she breaks down under the most severe self-accusations. Both parents are crushed under the load of guilt and haunted by the ever-present thought of the dead child. Allmers frequents the strand, where the water constantly reminds him of the horrible tragedy. And when for a moment he has forgotten the dead, he chides himself. He is doing penance, and can not think of ever enjoying life again. Rita is equally harassed by her guilty conscience. She constantly sees the large, lustrous eyes of the dead boy; and the terrible words that first convinced her that Eyolf was the drowned child

perpetually ring in her ears like a death knell. But unlike her husband she avoids the sight of water, that reminds her of her guilt. The desire for happiness and pleasure is too over-powering in her to be completely drowned by her feeling of guilt. There is, however, another marked difference between the guilty parents. The father tries to atone for his wrong by tormenting himself, by brooding over his deed. He blames the village children, who might have helped the child and failed to do so. He even suggests to his wife to have the village razed to the ground as a punishment. This, however, suggests to her a very different way of atoning for her wrong. She realizes that they have never done anything for these poor children, and hence have no right to expect anything in return. She now resolves—a rather strange and unexpected resolve on the part of such a thoroughgoing egoist—to take these children into her home, to teach them, and to bestow on them the care that she had neglected to bestow even upon Eyolf. From an extreme egoist seeking only self-gratification, she has become an altruist. The motives of this change are very clearly enunciated at the close of the play, when Allmers and Rita, as is so often the case in Ibsen's plays, are viewing the wreckage of their once so proud life. She tells her husband that this change was his work; he had left a void in her heart, and this she must endeavor to fill out with something that might be called love. But love, she admits, is not the real motive of this altruistic action, nor is it, as she intimates, her husband's book on "Retribution"; for this she has always hated and still does. The real motive, as she finally admits with a sad smile, is her desire to appease these large, open eyes, "*Ich will mich einschmeicheln bei den grossen, offenen Augen.*" And Allmers, surprised at this, says: "*Vielleicht könnte ich da mittun?*" That is, in the last analysis, it is the desire to atone for, in a measure, the wrong they had done, that impels them to undertake this work of service. They fully realize that this means a life of labor; but they hope that sabbath calm and rest may come to them at times and with it the presence of those whom they have lost. In this hope they resolve to go forward looking upward to the heights, the stars, the great calm.

A deep yet sweet and sublime sadness pervades this closing scene. The feeling of guilt is present in a high degree, but it does not find expression in idle tears and harrowing ravings, as is often the case. Nor is it caused by fear of future punishment, but

rather by a sense of personal responsibility that is rooted in a strong desire for justice.

In these two plays, then, the conception of tragic guilt is found quite unimpaired and vigorous, though somewhat altered by the modern views of the author and his characters.

The plays of August Strindberg are, to my mind, modern to a fault. He has over-stressed the modern demand for detail and for minute psychological analysis, he treats modern subjects, frequently social in nature, and seems to have a predilection for abnormal characters. The one great problem and source of the tragic for Strindberg is the conflict between the sexes. He regards this conflict as inevitable, and the individuals engaged in it—to them it is a struggle for existence and supremacy—willingly or unwillingly follow natural impulses and shrink from nothing to attain their goal. Witness the display of elemental passion over-riding lingering ideas of right and wrong, as exhibited in *Countess Julia* and *The Link*. In *Father* we have a typical case. Laura, the wife and protagonist, is absolutely without a trace of a conscience. She deliberately drives her husband to despair and death; and when her object has been achieved, she rejoices over her triumph without the slightest thought of guilt. Between her and her brother, the Pastor, the following conversation takes place:

Pastor. Laura, tell me, are you blameless in all this?

Laura. I? Why should I be to blame because a man goes out of his mind?

Pastor. You are strong, Laura, incredibly strong! Like a trapped fox, you would rather bite off your own leg than let yourself be caught! Like a master-thief—no accomplice, not even your own conscience! Look at yourself in the glass! . . . No, you dare not! Let me look at your hand. Not a treacherous bloodstain, not a trace of cunning poison! A little innocent murder that can not be reached by the law; an unconscious sin; unconscious! That is a splendid invention.

Laura. You talk as much as if you had a bad conscience. Accuse me if you can!

Pastor. I can not.

Laura. You see! You cannot, and therefore I am innocent.

In Strindberg's plays there is no real struggle of the individual with his conscience, but rather a struggle with external conditions or an antagonist of the opposite sex. In the play under discussion there is an internal struggle, but it is one with a fixed idea that is haunting its victim to distraction and death. Thus the modern man without a conscience fares no better than his forefathers, who

were tormented by their conscience when they did wrong. From the standpoint of effectiveness this new kind of struggle with a purely imaginary enemy is perhaps on a par with the old one. Yet I must confess that, though such cases are not impossible, they are rare, especially such extreme cases as Strindberg is fond of picturing. Hence we get the impression that the dramatist is over-drawing or dealing with exceptional cases instead of something genuinely characteristic of the race. In this respect the old struggle with an accusing conscience was superior and is, I venture to say, still so, in spite of claims to the contrary; for as Nietzsche has correctly said, the *feeling* of guilt has nothing to do with the freedom of the will. A look at the drama of antiquity is sufficient to convince us of this. The ancients regarded man as subject to a relentless fate, but nevertheless responsible for his actions and capable of feeling his guilt very keenly. A dramatist, if he desires to depict human nature as it really is and thus create a work of art of universal appeal and enduring worth, cannot afford to make a mere theory the basis of the dramatic conflict. The impelling motives must be universally understood and of unquestionable force. To me Strindberg's characters, though they are full of life and passion, seem to move in a somewhat strange and foreign world. Their struggles are something like a mortal combat between wild beasts—fierce and interesting struggles, to be sure—but not really capable of stirring our souls to their depth. *The Link* is a good illustration of such a struggle. The Baron and his wife are both slaves of overpowering natural, or perhaps better, unnatural tendencies. With open eyes they are rending each other. They realize the consequences of their actions and know that they are wrong. In a fashion they even feel responsible and guilty; but there is no trace of remorse or repentance, much less an effort to do better. They argue about it and in the end blame nature for having blundered. To the charge that she herself is to blame the Baroness answers: "Myself? But did I make myself? did I put evil tendencies, hatred, and wild passions into myself? No! And who was it that denied me the power and will to combat all those things?—When I look at myself this moment, I feel that I am to be pitied. Am I not?" And the Baron answers: "Yes you are! Both of us are to be pitied." And a little later he says to her: "Can you guess—do you know against whom we have been fighting? You call him God, but I

call him nature. And that was the master who egged us on to hate each other, just as he is egging people on to love each other. And now we are condemned to keep on tearing each other as long as a spark of life remains."

In *Countess Julia* the facts are almost the same. Julia, descended from a depraved mother and spoiled by bad training, is a dissolute character. Yet she is keenly conscious of her condition. At times she is actually oppressed by the weight of her sin, but at other moments she lays the blame on her parents and her training: "Who is to blame for what has happened? My father, my mother, I myself! I myself? I have no self. I have not a single thought which I did not get from my father, not a passion which does not come from my mother. . . . But how can it be my own fault?" Like the Baroness she has been denied both will and moral strength to resist her evil tendencies.

There is in these characters a wavering between an inborn feeling, a remnant of a conscience, and an acquired theory. One cannot call it a conflict or struggle, for they do not exert themselves in either direction. They are simply out of the state of mental and moral equilibrium and therefore extremely wretched. Tragic guilt, at least in the old sense of the term, is not found in these plays

Tolstoy's play *The Power of Darkness*, a lurid picture of crime and deepest tragedy, presents several noteworthy points with regard to the use and the conception of tragic guilt. Of the three chief characters involved, all the blackest of criminals, only two suffer from the pangs of a guilty conscience. Matryona, the mother of Nikita, is at the bottom of all the crimes. Her husband is a devout and god-fearing man, who pleads with his son to forsake his evil ways. Yet she encourages her son in his downward career and finally helps in forcing him to murder his own child. Yet she does not seem to have the slightest feeling of guilt. She is even pious about her crimes, insists on baptizing the infant before it is murdered by its father, and constantly has the name of God on her lips: "Well, but with the Lord's help, when we've covered this business, there'll be an end of it." Anisya, who with the help of Matryona murdered her husband to get his wealth and to be able to marry Nikita, gradually becomes more hardened in her career of crime. Yet her guilt weighs heavily upon her conscience: "I'm not going to be the only one! Let him also be a

murderer! Then he'll know how it feels! . . . I'll make him strangle his dirty brat! . . . I've worried myself to death all alone, with Peter's bones weighing on my mind! Let him feel it too!" She feels remorse, but with her it does not change to repentance as in the case of Nikita. To revenge herself on him for having betrayed her, she, fiend-like, drives him on to the same condition. He, on the other hand, after he has once been brought to his senses, assumes not only his own guilt but also that of his wife and of his mother. He makes his confession not because his crime has been found out, but at the very point when it is least likely to be discovered. The pangs of remorse, a deep conviction of guilt, force him to make his confession.

Though this play is thoroughly modern, and naturalistic in style, structure, and even in subject matter, the underlying code of ethics and morals is old. The poet has here revealed himself. He is imbued with the real spirit of Christianity, and its message of hope for the lost is for him not an empty sound; therefore he allows a ray of hope to penetrate into the black night of this modern Sodom. We are not entirely spared the harrowing scene, where a guilt-stained soul is racked by remorse; but the terror of this climax is relieved in that remorse changes to repentance. The subdued tragedy of this conclusion is a decided gain for the art work, which, already too full of horrors, is thus relieved of the harrowing end otherwise unavoidable.

Meister Oelze by Johannes Schlaf is one of the first and most genuine of German naturalistic plays. Because of its subject matter, it is especially well adapted to emphasize tragic guilt.

Aided by his mother, master Oelze has killed his stepfather, after he had first induced the latter to disinherit his own children and to make him his sole heir. Twenty years later Pauline, one of the disinherited children, returns to the old home. She suspects him and is determined to know the truth and have revenge. Oelze is now a consumptive in the last stages, but shrewd and unscrupulous as ever. He does not seem to be burdened with any sense of guilt, and at first thwarts quite successfully the frequent and well-directed thrusts of Pauline, who is endeavoring to find a vulnerable spot. Though he has shaken off the "old superstition" of a life and final reckoning after death, he is not secure against Pauline's weird tales nor against her claims that

she has an unfailing way to detect criminals. Fear seizes him and his stifled conscience begins to assert itself, though he is quite successful in concealing this fact. Reacting upon a well-aimed suggestion of his assailant, he is terribly frightened, has a violent hemorrhage, and after a few days, spent mostly in a delirious or semi-delirious condition, he succumbs to the dread disease. In the meantime Pauline has watched over him like a beast of prey over its victim. Scattered thoughts and words uttered in his delirium seem to show that his crime is heavy on his mind, that he is really suffering remorse. Yet he makes no confession, but is constantly on guard not to betray his secret. His feeling of guilt does little to hasten his end.

Schlaf, the naturalist, has made Pauline the accusing conscience of Oelze. Without her suggestions and relentless persecution he would perhaps have been successful in stifling his conscience and concealing his guilt. A dramatist of the old school would probable have changed the rôle of Pauline so that what is now her chief function would have been assigned to the inner voice, the guilty conscience of Oelze. Dramatic literature is replete with examples of this kind: Lady Macbeth, Franz Moor, Cardillac (Ludwig, *Das Fräulein von Scudéri*), etc. Technically this would have meant extended use of the soliloquy, while Schlaf never makes use of it. In other respects, too, the play would have been different. Schlaf has given us a vivid picture of a struggle between two shrewd, calculating persons. The inner voice taking the assailant's place, would have meant a deep psychic struggle, a struggle far more significant than this skillful duel between Oelze and Pauline. The end of Oelze is indeed sad, but to my mind lacks real tragic depth. His death is not associated with his guilt, but rather with his disease. Tragic guilt is present, but merely as an indistinct undertone, where it might well be the dominant note.

In a considerable number of the dramas of Gerhart Hauptmann, especially the earlier ones, *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, *Die Weber*, *Einsame Menschen*, *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*, tragic guilt does not appear. In each of these plays the bearer of the tragic charge—the terms tragic hero and heroine cannot properly be applied—is represented as innocent, as the victim of hereditary influences and environment. The blame is put upon society and its baneful institutions and stifling conventions. Like Ibsen's

Ghosts, these plays are chiefly concerned with social problems rather than with individuals. Even *Einsame Menschen* is no exception; for the main objective of the poet is not the character of Johannes or Käthe, but their mutual relation in a hidebound social group. As soon as the individual, the human soul itself, is the poet's chief concern, tragic guilt will inevitably assume an important rôle in tragedy. That this is the case, becomes evident from an examination of the dramas in which Hauptmann is most profound in his analysis of the human soul: *Die versunkene Glocke*, *Fuhrmann Henschel*, *Rose Bernd*, and *Der arme Heinrich*, all of which contain tragic guilt. How any one can read these plays and maintain that tragic guilt is not found in the modern drama, is strange indeed. We may safely assume that Hauptmann does not, like Otto Ludwig, consider guilt the essence of the tragic. But it is equally true that Hauptmann is convinced of the fact that guilt and the conviction of guilt is a real and potent factor in the human soul, and that the work of any artist dealing with this subject, who fails to recognize this factor, must necessarily be untrue and fragmentary to that extent.

Heinrich, the master-founder, in *Die versunkene Glocke* is endowed with a Faustian soul. Like his greater prototype, he is constantly striving, in error though it be, after fullness of life and perfection in his art. In his struggling soul a strange confusion of old and new ideas takes place. With the sanguine self-confidence of the poet-superman he aspires to banish the hard and gloomy aspects of the old faith and transfuse it with new radiancy. Man and nature are no longer to be at war but in perfect harmony and peace. High as his ideals are and pure as his purpose is, the way to realize them inevitably involves him in deep guilt. Under the spell of his dazzling vision he regards himself innocent and beyond the pale of the authority of the old standards. But when he encounters insurmountable difficulties, he loses courage and begins to reflect. The arrow of remorse finds lodgement in his heart and he is writhing in agony. Nickermann, who is objectifying for us what is going on in Heinrich's soul says:

Umsonst sind deine Opfer: Schuld bleibt Schuld!
 Den Segen Gottes hast du nicht ertrotzt,
 Schuld in Verdienst, Strafe in Lohn zu wandeln.
 Du bist voll Makel! Blutig starrt dein Kleid!
 Es wird die Wäsch'rin, die es waschen könnte,
 Dir nimmer kommen, wie du sie auch rufst. (Act IV)

Strive as he will, he can not shake off his past. He sees the shades of his two boys bringing him a pitcher filled with the bitter tears of their dead mother, and hears the heart-rending peals of the sunken bell. This is more than he can bear. His vision fades away in the presence of this awful reality. He curses his ideal, his work, and Rautendelein.

At this juncture a dramatist of the old faith would probably have stopped. The protagonist is crushed under the weight of his guilt. The fact that he has not suffered physical death matters little. We are convinced he cannot live, though he may continue to exist. Why did Hauptmann write a fifth act? Surely not merely to show us that Heinrich really died, nor to clear Heinrich of his guilt, though this is done to a great extent by casting the bulk of it upon society lost in prejudices; but rather to weep, as the elves weep over dead Balder, over the temporary failure of his ideal, which in the end, after the long night, shall after all triumph: "Die Sonne . . . die Sonne kommt! Die Nacht ist lang."

From a few passages of the play, where it is evident that the author himself is speaking, one might draw the conclusion that Heinrich's guilt does not consist in transgressing against the accepted moral standard, but in the fact that he was too weak to attain his ideal:

Gott rief dich auf, mit ihm zu ringen—
und nun verwarf er dich, denn du bist schwach! (Act IV)
du woarscht a groader Sprosz,
stoark, doch nich stoark genug. Du woarscht berufa,
ock blus a Auserwählter woarschte nich. (Act V)

Had he been strong enough to realize his ideal, to effect "die Umwertung aller Werte" (for that is what the realization of his dreams would have meant), what is now guilt would have been real merit. Such an interpretation, however, does not alter our conclusion that there is tragic guilt in this drama. It merely broadens the concept of tragic guilt.

In *Fuhrmann Henschel* tragic guilt assumes a greater rôle than in any other of Hauptmann's plays, in as much as the consciousness of his guilt directly impels Henschel to take his own life. Though this drama is in all other respects thoroughly modern, with regard to the conception of guilt it is on the old basis. Henschel's conception of personal responsibility (which, to be sure,

need not be the author's) has nothing in common with modern emancipated views, but is on the contrary superstitious in nature. He is haunted to death by his dead wife because he broke his promise not to marry Hanna, the servant girl. Though he has suffered much at the hands of Hanna, he would never have taken his own life had not the weight of his guilt driven him to distraction. It may be objected, to be sure, that the mere breaking of this promise cannot and does not constitute tragic guilt, that in reality he is innocent and merely the victim of a fixed idea, whose force is augmented by the consciousness of having been the cause of his own misery. This may be the opinion of the enlightened reader or spectator, and probably was that of the author. Fuhrmann Henschel would then be a case of tragic innocence. From his own standpoint, however, guilt is an awful reality, the impelling force of the whole tragedy. Hence guilt is after all the essence of this tragedy. Remove it, and you have nothing left.

Rose Bernd, undoubtedly one of the greatest of modern tragedies, is to an equal degree bound up with the conception of tragic guilt. The thought of personal responsibility to God is indissolubly connected with this tragedy. All the characters, even Flamm, who entertains emancipated ideas, are under its sway. Rôse is finally driven to distraction; not by the weight of her guilt alone, however, crushing as this is, but also by the cruel persecution of her despoiler and the blind sense of honor of her father. Rose is and feels guilty; but after all, far greater guilt attaches to her persecutors and the social conditions in which she lives.

In the three plays just discussed, the protagonist in each case commits an overt act, a crime, and dies conscious of his guilt. In *Der arme Heinrich* there is no overt act, no actual crime, and the protagonist does not suffer death. Yet the feeling of guilt is equally strong. Heinrich feels guilty not because of any wrong he has done, but rather because of the rebellious condition of his soul. Explaining his cure he says:

Als mich der erste Strahl der Gnade streifte
und eine Heilige zu mir niederstieg,
ward ich gereinigt: das Gemeine stob
aus der verdumpften und verruchten Brust,
der mörderische Dunst der kalten Seele
entwich, der Hass, der Rachedurst, die Wut,

die Angst—die Raserei, mich aufzuzwingen
den Menschen, sei's auch durch gemeinen Mord,
erstarb. (Act V, 5)

Quite in harmony, then, with the character of the whole play, which is free from all grosser elements, the conception of guilt has been purified and deepened, so that the mere thought, the motive, the condition of the soul, is regarded as the actual crime. Subjectively this guilt has all the force of actual guilt, but objectively it has no fatal results; and hence the happy end of the play is well justified.

In these plays we after all have the real Hauptmann, the poet who drops the artist's plummet down into the secret depth of the human soul, in its struggle with itself and its environment. Theory plays no part in these masterpieces. They appeal to us with the directness and convincing power of real life.

I shall not attempt in this connection to discuss any of Sudermann's plays in detail, but merely point out a few things in passing. Magda in *Die Heimat* is theoretically above the old standards of right and wrong. She insists that one must become guilty—according to the old standard—in order to attain the highest development of one's individuality: "Schuldig müssen wir werden, wenn wir wachsen wollen. Grösser werden als unsere Sünde, das ist mehr wert als die Reinheit, die ihr predigt" (III, 6). But practically she can not completely free herself from the power of the old conception. She finally realizes that after all she can not live entirely to herself, that her actions affect others, her father, her family, her child. As she contemplates the awful consequences of her life she cries out: "Mein Leben drückt mir auf den Kopf" (V, 5). As in the case of Ibsen's characters, Magda's feeling of guilt has nothing to do with a belief in a life and final reckoning after death. It is the result of a feeling of social responsibility.

In *Johannisfeuer* matters are somewhat different, Georg and Marikke are ignorant of such new ideas as impel Magda. Theoretically they accept the old standards, but practically they follow their own instincts. They know and feel that they have sinned, but do not feel the slightest remorse. They are, like Grillparzer's "Hero," quite naïve in their sin.

Max Halbe has completely eliminated the conception of guilt. His characters are never guilty. They are the slaves of a modern fate, their own passions and the powerful forces of their environ-

ment. Engaged in a hopeless struggle, they are quite unconcerned about ethical or moral standards.

What has been said of Max Halbe is even more true of Frank Wedekind. He was not content with degrading man to the level of a mere animal governed by instinct and conditions of habitat, but proceeded to make of him a ravenous and filthy beast. That this was his real intention one can hardly doubt after one has read *Frühling's Erwachen*, *Der Erdgeist*, *Die Büchse der Pandora*, *Franziska*, or *Simson*. He introduces his *Erdgeist* very fittingly with a prolog in which the tamer of wild beasts invites the public to view and admire the real brute: (The italics are Wedekind's)—

“Was seht ihr in den Lust, und Trauerspielen?—
Haustiere, die so wohlgesittet fühlen,
 An blasser Pflanzenkost ihr Mütchen kühlen
 Und schwelgen in behaglichem Geplärr,
 Wie jene andern—unten im Patterre:

 Das *wahre* Tier, das *wilde*, schöne Tier,
 Das—meine Damen!—sehn Sie nur bei mir.”

He then has the serpent, the heroine of the play, carried in and addresses her as follows:

“Mein süßes Tier, sei ja nur nicht geziert!
 Nicht *albern*, nicht *gekünstelt*, nicht *verschoben*.
 Auch wenn die Kritiker dich weniger loben.
 Du hast kein Recht, uns durch Miaun und Fauchen
 Die *Urgestalt* des *Weibes* zu verstauchen,
 Durch Faxenmachen uns und Fratzenschneiden
 Des *Lasters Kindereinfalt* zu erleiden!
 Du sollst—drum sprech' ich heute sehr ausführlich—
Natürlich sprechen und nicht unnatürlich!”

In *Die Büchse der Pandora*, a sequel to *Der Erdgeist*, he says: “Um wieder auf die Fährte einer grossen gewaltigen Kunst zu gelangen, müssten wir uns möglichst viel unter Menschen bewegen, die nie in ihrem Leben ein Buch gelesen haben, denen die einfachsten animalischen Instinkte bei ihren Handlungen massgebend sind. In meinem ‘Erdgeist’ habe ich schon aus voller Kraft nach diesen Prinzipien zu arbeiten gesucht.” (Werke III, 125 f.). Lulu, the dominating figure of the two plays, is passion and vice incarnate, a genuine beast of prey who is responsible for the death of her three successive husbands. To be sure these were little better than she. She has no conscience and is never disturbed in the least by a consciousness or a feeling of guilt. If Wedekind

has here truthfully depicted human nature, then I am profoundly grateful to a kindly fate that has hitherto veiled my eyes to such, natural and undefiled beauty. Perhaps I am a dull philistine, but I can not see, how any one can take the author seriously (I doubt that he takes himself seriously) when in the preface to *Die Büchse der Pandora* he compares himself with the crucified founder of the Christian religion, who also espoused the cause of the fallen. In view of such human degradation and bestiality as we find in these plays, one ought to hesitate to take at its face value the statement of Lewisohn that the modern naturalistic German drama attained so high an order of qualities by its vision of *man as he is not as he ought to be*.⁶ I should be loath to think that Wedekind's Lulu is more true to nature, i.e., human nature, than Goethe's Iphigenie. However, it is possible that Lulu may become the type of future generations if the present generation should be exclusively fed on "naturalistic art" of this variety.

Hermann Bahr, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Arthur Schnitzler have also completely abandoned the old conception of tragic guilt. They conceive man as unfree, a slave of fate. This fate, however, is neither that of the ancients, nor that of the 19th century fate-tragedies, nor, as is the case with some of the naturalists, the forces of heredity and environment, but rather an unknown, mysterious force, which is in some cases identical with natural instincts. In some of their plays (*Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, *Das gerettete Venedig*, *Der Schleier der Beatrice*, *Liebelei*) the problem of guilt is completely ignored. Whenever it is at all faced by them, they represent man as unfree and hence not responsible for his actions. This is true even where the character really feels guilty, as Oedipus, for instance, in *Oedipus und die Sphinx*. In vain one seeks in these plays a character that has sufficient will power or even the desire to inhibit natural appetites and cravings. Or if perchance such a character is portrayed, as in Bahr's *Der arme Narr*, the author holds him up to scorn and ridicule. The conception of human nature exhibited by these writers is, I fear, incompatible with the highest art. The human will is, after all, a factor too well recognized and too powerful to be discarded so lightly and so completely. And when it is discarded, something

⁶ Ludwig Lewisohn, *The Modern Drama*, New York, 1915, p. 164. Lewisohn's work is an admirable study of the modern drama.

equally well recognized and convincing must take its place, as for example the forces of heredity and environment, which play so important a rôle in some of the works of Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Halbe. We are not convinced by the feeble plea of an impotent character trying to excuse his behavior by such blinds as: "es handelt in mir," "ich muss," "es geschieht in mir." The average man instinctively feels that he is master of his own fate, and he acts on this conviction and expects others to do the same. It matters little that this is actually true only to a slight degree.⁷

According to these writers guilt is not to be avoided but to be sought. "Glücklich machen ist besser als schuldlos sein," says Doktor Reuman in Schnitzler's drama, *Der einsame Weg*. He regrets that he himself has only the will but not the talent to lead a dissolute life: "die Sehnsucht, die am tiefsten in mir steckt, ist die: ein Schurke zu sein, ein Kerl, der heuchelt, verführt, hohnlacht, über Leichen schreitet. Aber ich bin durch Mängel meines Temperaments dazu verurteilt, ein anständiger Mensch zu sein—und, was vielleicht noch schmerzlicher ist, von allen Leuten zu hören, dass ich es bin." (Act I, 6). Frau Wegrat, who had gone astray in her youth, says: "Ich bereue ja nichts. Ich glaube, ich habe nie etwas bereut." (I, 6) The same views are expressed by Marie in *Der Ruf des Lebens*: "Wollen Sie sich etwa einbilden," she says, "dass ich mich für eine Sünderin nehme, die sich eine Schuld von der Seele beichten will? Sie irren. Keine Reue, nein, meine Verzweiflung schreie ich Ihnen ins Gesicht . . . meine Verzweiflung, dass es zu spät ist . . . zu spät! Dass der, für den ich all das hätte tun wollen, tun müssen, fort ist . . . dass ich erst heut dazu erwacht bin, mich selber ganz zu verstehen . . . dass ich in dieser Stunde erst zu allen Sünden und Wonnen reif geworden bin, nach denen es mich lockte, und dass es nur nicht mehr her Mühe wert ist, die Sünderin zu werden, die ich bin!" (I, 9) There is no longer any guilt. Der Adjunkt in the same play says: "Ja es ist meine Schuld." And the physician (probably the poet himself) answers: "Nicht Sie, Herr Adjunkt, haben das aus ihr gemacht. Ist denn je ein Mensch eines anderen Schicksal? Er ist immer nur das Mittel, dessen das Schicksal sich bedient. Katarina war bestimmt, zu werden, was sie ward.

⁷ In this connection, compare the excellent article by Alfred Klaar on "Die Krisis der Tragödie," *Literarisches Echo* 12, p. 679-85, 983 ff.

Sie waren zur Hand, das ist alles." (III, 10)

Thus not only individual responsibility and guilt but also social guilt is wiped out. Here, I think, we have come upon the real reason, why there is no trace of real and effective social criticism in the works of these writers, such as we find in Ibsen and Hauptmann for instance. Where no one is to blame, it is quite useless to criticise.

The art of D'Annunzio is closely akin to that of these Austrian dramatists. In his *Daughter of Jorio* (1904), we have a clear case of tragic innocence. In *Francesca Da Rimini* (1902) and *Giocondo* (1901), there is no tragic guilt, though the feeling of guilt is present in the former. In *Giocondo* the idea of a relentless fate impelling its victims toward their destiny is strongly emphasized. Settala, the young sculptor, who has attempted suicide to escape from his fate, says after his undesired recovery: "Only death could stay the rush of desire that drives my whole being, fatally, towards its own peculiar good. Now I live again: I recognize in myself the same man, the same force. Who shall judge me if I follow out my destiny?" (Act II) He did not attempt suicide because he knows himself guilty for having loved the woman that had given him the inspiration for a thousand statues; but to escape facing his saintly wife, whose very perfection is an unbearable though silent reproach to him. He does feel an obligation toward her, not toward any moral law. In the end he becomes the victim of his inexorable fate.

Giocondo, the woman in question, expresses similar views to Silvia, who has met her rival and taken her to task for estranging her husband: "Household affections have no place here; domestic virtues have no sanctuary here. This is a place outside laws and beyond common rights. He is alone here with the instruments of his art. Now I am nothing but an instrument of his art. Nature has sent me to him to bring him a message, and to serve him. I obey; I await him to serve him still." (Act III, 3) In other words, they consider themselves above moral law and order, destined to achieve their mission, regardless of any consequences. And this is also the poet's view.

The fatalistic conception of life found in the works of the writers just discussed is even more conspicuous in the plays and writings

of Maurice Maeterlinck, the father of this modern fatalism.⁸ His strong leaning toward mysticism has caused him to see human nature quite different from most modern writers. He is fond of placing his characters in fantastic and weird surroundings; he floods them with a strange and ghastly light and veils them in an atmosphere that is oppressive and stifling. Fate dogs every step of these strange and shadowy beings, these fantoms and thralls. The thought of guilt never seems to enter the author's mind, and if perchance it ever comes into the consciousness of any of his characters, they brush it aside by declaring their innocence, as Mélisande, for instance, in *Pelléas and Mélisande*. His plays, many of which have neither plot, action, nor character portrayal, but are merely weird and somewhat doleful word-pictures, reduced short stories in dialog, often do not involve the problem of guilt: *The Intruder*, *The Home*, *The Seven Princesses*. In others, *The Blind*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, the question is ignored. It is painful to see the creatures of his fancy groping in semi-darkness, mere puppets of a fate shrouded in deepest mystery and eluding the closest scrutiny. But one thing Maeterlinck, as far as I know his plays, does not do, namely degrade man to the level of a beast wallowing in the mire.

Turning now to the modern French drama for a moment, we find matters little different. Henri Becque in *Les Corbeaux* (1882) and *La Parisienne* (1885) has discarded the idea of guilt completely, although in both plays it is given with the subject matter. In two plays of Jules Lemaitre, however, we find it strongly emphasized. In *La Revoltée* (1889). Countess de Voves, who has been unfaithful to her marital vows, is tormented with bitter remorse; and this is greatly augmented when she realizes that her illegitimate daughter has inherited her own disposition to be reckless, and that she is about to commit a similar act. The reckless and rebellious daughter is at first quite free from any thought of guilt or personal responsibility, but is in the end converted to this view. In *Le Pardon* (1895) each of the three characters is involved in guilt and is painfully conscious of it. The life of the two women especially is embittered by remorse. But as all three are equally guilty, they can understand and pardon each other and a tragic end is thus avoided. In the plays of Brieux guilt usually

⁸ See *Literarisches Echo*, vol. 12, p. 984 f.

assumes an important rôle. Brieux, like Shaw, is primarily a social critic and reformer rather than an artist. He is unsparing and almost brutally outspoken in his denunciation of social evils of every kind. But he is no less insistent on preaching personal responsibility. Fate has neither force nor terror for him. He never mentions it. To those who have read any of his plays I need not prove my statements by citing particular passages; yet I shall offer two passages from *Maternité*. The lawyer for the defense, who has been warned by the judge not to defend the crime of abortion, says: "À mes yeux, l'avortement est un crime, Mais ce que je m'efforcerai de démontrer, c'est qu'en n'admettant pas la recherche de la paternité, en ne considérant pas comme respectable toute maternité quelle qu'en soit l'origine, la Société s'est enlevé le droit de condamner un crime rendu excusable par l'hypocrisie des mœurs et l'indifférence des lois." (Act III, 1). Tupin, one of the accused, says to the presiding judge in the last act: "Les coupables, c'est ceux qui, pendant que nos enfants crevent de faim, nous conseillent d'en faire d'autres." And the lawyer says: "Le coupable, c'est le Séducteur, et c'est l'hypocrisie sociale."

In the plays of the Spanish dramatist José Echegaray, the old and the new are freely mingled. His style and technique are largely old, but he is fond of treating modern subjects. The one subject that constantly recurs in his plays is unhappy love. This subject is, however, always coupled with some other. Madness and heredity are also favorites with him. In his plays we rarely find a trace of fatalism, such as we found in the dramas of Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, and the Austrians. He has created heroic figures of the old type, men and women with a sensitive conscience, a high and pure conception of honor and morality; and the accusations he hurls against a corrupt modern society even surpass those of Ibsen in point of directness and vehemence. Nothing could prove this more clearly than a comparison of his *Son of Don Juan* with Ibsen's *Ghosts*, by which it was inspired. In Ibsen's play we only hear of the dissolute life of Oswald's father, we are spared the revolting scenes of his debauchery and vice. In Echegaray's play the dissolute father plays one of the chief rôles together with his two boon companions, who are no better than he. There are two victims, as in the *Ghosts*, though here not children of the same

father. They are physical wrecks, though the chief malady of Lazarus is mental. Morally, however, they are sound. Oswald begs his mother to give him Regina; Lazarus refuses to accept Carmen as his bride, because he feels it would be doing her an injustice. Only after madness has full mastery over him does he desire to escape and enjoy life with her. This lofty moral sense is characteristic of most of Echegaray's heroes and heroines. They never escape from their conscience. He constantly flays vice, in fact he only portrays it that he may castigate it. Many of his tragic figures are innocent, e.g., Don Lorenzo in *Folly or Saintliness*, the three principal characters in *The Great Galeoto*, and also of *The Son of Don Juan*. But there is guilt in all of his plays, and he never hesitates to say where it lies and to flay the guilty for it, though they often escape death and external punishment. Thus the three roués in *The Son of Don Juan* witness the fruit of their dissolute lives but are spared, while the innocent victims go down to an untimely grave. The same is true with regard to *The Great Galeoto* and *The Madman Divine*. We therefore have tragic innocence in many of his plays, but not in the sense suggested by Strauss, i. e., because man is determined by inborn tendencies or his environment. Man is looked upon as free, as master of his fate, as fully responsible for his actions. This is true even in *Marianna*, a play closely resembling the modern fate plays of the Austrians. Marianna is struggling against powerful natural instincts, from which she can escape only by a voluntary death. This emphasis on the supremacy of the will and the conscience over animal instincts and passions puts Echegaray in the same class with Tolstoy; though as an artist he is far inferior to him.

In the modern English drama the idea of guilt is, on the whole, quite prominent. In the three plays of H. A. Jones that I examined: *Saints and Sinners* (1884), *The Tempter* (1893), and *Michael and His Lost Angel* (1896), tragic guilt plays a very important rôle. These plays are really of the old type in style, structure, and even in subject matter. *Saints and Sinners* contains a good deal of social criticism, but in spite of this fact, man is viewed from the individualistic rather than the social viewpoint. The conception of tragic guilt is that of the classicists. Hence remorse and a struggle with a guilty conscience are outstanding features of these plays.

Pinero in his *Iris* (1901) leaves the question of guilt unsettled. He touched it only slightly, leaning toward a fatalism which finds expression in such phrases as: "You were sent into the world so constituted" and "one is sent into the world shaped this way or that" (Act I). But in general the question of guilt is ignored. The same is true with regard to O. Wilde's *Vera*, an old type play, and *Salome*, a situation play like Maeterlinck's. In both plays the problem of guilt is completely ignored. In his *Duchess of Padua*, however, tragic guilt is greatly stressed. There is much to remind one of Lady Macbeth's: "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" "Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

In the plays of Bernard Shaw, as far as I know them, the question of individual guilt does not enter. Shaw is primarily concerned with society and not with the individual. His plays are in essence very clever discussions of social problems. He not only does not reckon with the individual, but even slights society and devotes his best efforts to criticizing its baneful and wornout institutions. This being the case there can, of course, be neither individual nor tragic guilt, and even social guilt is not always present.

John Galsworthy, who is no less bent on reform and equally modern in his thinking on social problems of the day, has avoided purely theoretical discussions. His plays embody real conflicts, in which both the individual and society play important rôles. In *The Mob* (1914) the hero, Stephen More, suffers an innocent death for his convictions. He alone dares to raise his voice in protest against his country's waging a war of conquest. His pleas are drowned out by the howling of the wild mob. He dies at their hands. But in less than a year a monument is erected to his memory. What shall society do with its failures? is the question considered in *The Pigeon* (1912); and these failures, vagabonds, drunkards, women of the street, etc., are looked upon as determined by natural disposition and tendencies. "It is stronger than me," Ferrant, the tramp philosopher, frequently says. Something of the fatalism we met in the plays of the Austrian dramatists is found in this play; yet its general atmosphere is not as depressing and unwholesome as that of many of the Austrian dramas. In his earlier plays *Strife* (1907) and *Justice* (1911) this fatalism is not present. *Strife* pictures most

vividly and powerfully the inevitable struggle between Capital and Labor. As the conflict is one between classes rather than individuals, there is no individual guilt involved. *Justice* is a vehement arraignment of society for its treatment of criminals. The individual, however, is not entirely freed from guilt and to a certain degree he is regarded as personally responsible.

The plays of Granville Barker are thoroughly modern both in form and content. In his *Madras House* (1909) the question of guilt might have played an important rôle, but does not. The one character who is really culpable according to the old accepted standards of ethics considers himself far above these standards. He disregards them or tramples them under foot without the slightest feeling of guilt. In *Waste* (1906-7) guilt is recognized, but put on circumstances rather than man. Trebell, the tragic hero, who is thoroughly modern in his views and stands above the old conception of right and wrong, says: "If I were on that jury, I would say murder too and accuse . . . so many circumstances. . . . What lumber of opinions we inherit and keep!" The jury in question is investigating the death of Mrs. O'Connell. She had sinned with Trebell and being denied his love, refused to become the mother of his child and sought death. Trebell regards himself quite innocent. He blames society, which by its baneful conventions has forced this woman to deprive him of his child, his only means of self-expression. He ends his life made useless by this inexcusable waste.

If we now sum up the results of our investigation, we find that the statement that tragic guilt is not found in the modern drama and that it has no legitimate place in it, is at best only a half truth. It is true that tragic guilt is not found in a large number of modern plays; but it is equally true that it has been retained, though modified to some extent, in many of the best modern dramas. We saw how tragic guilt and the feeling of guilt is most pronounced in the dramas dealing primarily with the study of the human soul, and that it virtually disappears or is replaced by social guilt in plays primarily dealing with social conditions and problems.

An important change that has come upon the modern drama as a result of or coincident with the elimination of the conception of guilt is the disappearing of the intense inner struggle, and the substitution of discussions, or the struggle with a mysterious fate,

or with the power of hereditary traits and environment. The old type drama, where will struggled against will, has largely been supplanted by plays of situation and discussion. Will no longer opposes will; but beings almost if not entirely devoid of will are the puppets of fate or the victims of conditions, circumstances, or their own instincts.

The tragic hero in the old sense of the term has almost disappeared. Instead of strong, self-willed characters that are master of their own fate, we meet pitiable weaklings, thralls of natural appetites and social conditions. Even the most aggressive and heroic among them are more passive than active. In general, then, it may be said that in the modern tragedy action has to a great extent been replaced by suffering.

Among the large number of plays where tragic guilt does not obtain there are, no doubt, some that will live in the literature of the world. They may be based on an erroneous conception of man, yet that conception is one of sufficient weight to demand and deserve a place in literature. But to prate of the complete elimination of the concept of guilt is folly as long as the feeling of freedom and moral responsibility, which, as Nietzsche maintains, has nothing to do with the freedom of the will, is so firmly implanted in the human breast. To eliminate this completely from the drama would mean a misrepresentation of human nature and would deprive the dramatist of a fruitful source of the tragic, the inner conflict. To my mind, there is nothing more genuinely tragic than the struggle of the soul with itself; and a guilty conscience is still one of the most effective and formidable antagonists.

The modern drama is a real contribution to literature in as much as it pictures man not as a mere individual but rather as a social being. The social viewpoint is one of the most dominant characteristics of our age, and perhaps the only one that will continue to live in ages to come. If the modern dramatist had failed to seize and hold fast this characteristic, his products would have little or no claim on the future.

That some of the dramatists in their zeal as reformers went so far as almost to eliminate the individual, is unfortunate, but can easily be understood. They seem to have overlooked the fact that society is after all made up of individuals and can best

be reached and reformed through these. It is the height of folly to upbraid society for its shortcomings and crimes, if the individuals of whom it is composed are denied the power and possibility to rise above their environment. The greatest harm to both society and art has come through that type of the modern play that makes man a mere puppet of fate or slave of his passions. This fatalistic conception of life, embodied in the dramas of some of the neo-romantic writers, is a serious blow to the tragic art. There are signs, however, that the great world war which has already, at least in Germany, swept away so much of the elements of decay in literature, will exert its purifying influence above all upon the spirit of the drama.

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